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E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KMDR](#) [KPAO](#) [OPIP](#) [OPRC](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PK](#)

SUBJECT: PAKISTAN MEDIA REACTION: AUGUST 21, 2009

Summary: National political stories dominated headlines in several major newspapers on Friday. Reports and photographs of the "surrender of 60 Taliban militants of Fazlullah group to security forces in Swat" received front page coverage. Newspapers highlighted the Foreign Office Spokesman's remarks that the "U.S. help was not linked to IP (Iran-Pakistan) gas project." His repudiation of the media speculations on the expected number of the Marines to be stationed at the expanded U.S. Embassy compound in Pakistan as "highly inflated" also received extensive coverage. Pegged to it were reports that Ambassador Patterson had "rebutted reports about U.S. marines (increase in numbers in Pakistan)." Reports that "Pakistan started manufacturing of much advanced tactical drone - Unmanned Ariel Vehicle indigenously" garnered media attention. U.S. President Obama's remarks that "we took out Baitullah Mahsud" the top Taliban leader in Pakistan, received prominent display.

Several major dailies ran editorials on Prime Minister Gilani's recent remarks that ruled out the possibility of a trial for former military President Musharraf and its repercussions. However, some newspapers editorialized the recently concluded visit of the U.S. Special Envoy Holbrooke. The leading mass circulation populist, often sensational Urdu daily "Jang," observed that "despite explicit concerns of the Obama Administration that the Al Qaeda leadership has shifted its stronghold from Afghanistan to Pakistan's North Western tribal areas, the recent statements emerging out of Washington are also a manifestation of the U.S. desire to establish a long-term partnership with Pakistan." The liberal Urdu daily "Express," called Ambassador Holbrooke's visit to Karachi "extremely important." In contrast, the pro-Taliban Jihadi Urdu daily "Islam" described the visit as "worthless to bring about any substantial change in the prevailing situation in Pakistan." End Summary.

News Stories

"60 Taliban Of Fazlullah Group Surrender" "Dawn" (08/21)

"Sixty militants, a Taliban commander among them, surrendered themselves to security forces at the Kanju airport in Swat valley on Thursday, Colonel Akhtar, a spokesman for the Swat media centre, said."

U.S. Energy Help Not Linked To Iran-Pakistan (IP) Gas Project: FO "The News" (08/21)

"While welcoming the U.S. offer to help Pakistan overcome its acute

energy shortage, the government says that there is no linkage between the U.S. assistance and the Iran-Pakistan (IP) gas pipeline project, said the spokesman at the Foreign Office at the weekly media briefing....."

"U.S. Keen To Help Pak In Energy Sector: Holbrooke" "The News" (08/21)

"U.S. Special Representative to Pakistan, Richard Holbrooke has said that U.S. has already started talks with Pakistan government and energy experts to determine energy crisis. Secretary Hillary Clinton will be in Islamabad in six weeks, and at that time she would make further announcement, he said while talking to a private TV channel. He said that it is big decision that U.S. is to focus on energy needs of Pakistan."

"Media's Speculation On U.S. Embassy's Expansion Not True" "Daily Times" (08/21)

"The media speculation regarding an increase in the security staff at the U.S. Embassy is not correct, Foreign Office Spokesman Abdul Basit said on Thursday. Speaking at a weekly briefing, he said the U.S. had not yet formally asked for expanding its Embassy compound or deploying additional security staff."

"Patterson Rebuts Reports About U.S. Marines" "Daily Times" (08/21)

"Reports of thousands of U.S. Marines being deputed at the U.S. Embassy in Islamabad are baseless, a private TV channel quoted U.S. Ambassador Anne Patterson as saying on Thursday. The envoy said there were only eight Marines in the U.S. Embassy in Islamabad and seven more would join them for security duties. She said there had been no agreement between former President Pervez Musharraf and the U.S. on bringing 2,000 Marines to Pakistan."

"Pakistan Starts UAV's Manufacturing" "The News" (08/21)

"Pakistan has started manufacturing of much-advanced tactical drone - Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV)-indigenously. Chairman PAC Board Air Marshal Farhat Hussain Khan inaugurated the commencement of UAV Co-Production Project at Pakistan Aeronautical Complex (PAC) Kamra on Thursday."

"We Took Out Mahsud, Says Obama" "The News" (08/21)

"U.S. President Barack Obama said on Thursday 'we took out' Baitullah Mahsud, the Pakistani Taliban Chief believed to have been killed this month in a missile strike by a U.S. drone. You've got the Pakistan Army for the first time fighting in a very aggressive way and that's how we took out Mahsud, Obama told a radio talk show host in a live broadcast from the White House."

"Talks Possible If Taliban Disarm, Accept Government's Writ: Qureshi" "Daily Times" (08/21)

"Dialogue with the Taliban is possible only if they lay down their weapons and accept the writ of the state, Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi said on Thursday."

"Bajaur Bazaar Reopens After A Year" "Dawn" (08/21)

"The Inayat Kalley Bazaar, a trading hub of Bajaur tribal region, was reopened on Thursday after remaining closed for more than a year due to unrest in the region, official sources said."

"8 Injured in Rawalpindi Attack" "Dawn" (08/21)

"Eight people, including four policemen, were injured when a bomb exploded close to a police patrol car on the Misryal road, Rawalpindi on Thursday, City Police Officer Rao Iqbal told 'Dawn.'"

"12 Killed, Several Injured As U.S. Drone Fired Missile In North Waziristan" "The Nation" (08/21)

"The death toll of U.S. drone strike early Friday in Danday Darpa Khel reached to 12 as women and children are also among the dead, whereas several were injured, some of them reported in a critical condition, eyewitnesses said. According to reports, all victims of

the attack belonged to Afghanistan. Five houses were also demolished in the attack."

"Pakistan, U.S. To Revive Strategic Dialogue" "Dawn" (08/21)

"Pakistan and the United States have agreed to revive the Strategic Dialogue and upgrade it to ministerial level for rejuvenating their strategic partnership. The fourth round of the Strategic Dialogue will be held in Islamabad during Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's visit to Pakistan in October, diplomatic sources told 'Dawn' on Wednesday."

"Friends of Pakistan Group To Meet In Istanbul" "The News" (08/21)

"Senior officials from the Friends of Pakistan group will convene in Istanbul next week to discuss development projects for the conflict-ridden country, Turkish diplomats said on Thursday."

"U.S. Naval Official Meets COAS And Naval Chief" "Daily Times" (08/21)

"U.S. Naval Operations Chief Admiral Gary Roughead called on Chief of Army Staff General Ashfaq Kayani on Thursday at the General Headquarters. The visiting dignitary remained with Gen. Kayani for some time and discussed matters of professional interest."

"U.S. Releases Pakistani Journalist" "Daily Times," "The News" (08/21)

"U.S. immigration officials have released Rahman Bunairee, a Pakistani journalist working for Voice of America's 'Deewa Radio.' Rahman Bunairee, 33, was freed on Wednesday, more than a week after he arrived in the United States and was taken into custody at Dulles International Airport outside Washington."

"Pakistan Under Pressure At Geneva N-talks" "Dawn" (08/21)

"Pakistan came under severe pressure from the major nuclear powers on Thursday to end its defiance of 64 other countries in blocking international disarmament talks. Despite warnings that the blockage could discredit the world's principal disarmament forum, Pakistan's ambassador Zamir Akram held firm against an unusual joint offensive by Britain, China, Russia and the United States."

"United States Donates Five Ambulances For Use In Buner, Mardan And Charsadda" "The Statesman," "Business Recorder" (08/21)

"The United States government donated five ambulances to the districts of Mardan, Buner and Charsadda of the NWFP province on Thursday."

"U.S. Embassy Opens Martin Luther King Reading Room At The Islamabad Club" "The News" (08/21)

"U.S. Embassy Public Affairs Counselor Gonzalo R. Gallegos officially opened the Martin Luther King (MLK) Reading Room at the Islamabad Club in a ceremony on Thursday, says a press release."

Editorials/Op-eds

"Pak-U.S. Relations - Create Confidence In The Masses," an editorial in the leading mass circulation populist, often sensational Urdu daily "Jang" (cir. 300,000) (08/21)

"Despite the specific concerns of the Obama Administration that the al-Qaeda leadership has shifted its stronghold from Afghanistan to Pakistan's North Western tribal areas, the recent statements emerging out of Washington are also a manifestation of the U.S. desire to establish a long-term partnership with Pakistan, in stark contrast to its previous attitude. Addressing a press conference in Karachi, the visiting U.S. Special Envoy Holbrooke, said that 'the relations between the U.S. and Pakistan now are above politics.' It was his fifth visit to Pakistan during the last six months, therefore various circles are also expressing their reservations over the increased frequency of these forays. According to one point of view, in the presence of an active American ambassador, the

appointment of a special envoy for Afghanistan and Pakistan may be a part of the greater game being played in the region since the 9/11 attacks. Another group says that the term 'Af-Pak' has reduced Pakistan to the status of an extremely backward and balkanized region being ruled by the notorious warlords while in the past, it considered a country at par with India. Another school of thought opines that the U.S. special envoy should have been authorized to deal only with the top officials of the Pakistan government and he should avoid meetings with the leaders of main political parties of the country. However, the U.S. government says that it wants to help its ally at the grass-root level therefore it is necessary to take all stakeholders, including the opposition parties, on board, to achieve this goal. There is a popular perception in Pakistan that the freedom of the future generations has been mortgaged in lieu of the foreign loans. The foreign powers often used their financial aid as a stick to blackmail the underprivileged countries. The international community, particularly the U.S., will improve its standing in the eyes of the masses by helping Pakistan to get rid of its foreign debts."

"Richard Holbrooke's Visit To Karachi And Important Announcements," an editorial in liberal Urdu daily "Express" (cir. 25,000) (08/21)

"Richard Holbrooke's visit to Karachi was extremely important in the sense that his role has been productive and significant as a peace broker, in the reconstruction of areas devastated by wars, and in rehabilitation of affectees. His visit to Karachi will have long term results.... Holbrooke's announcement that the Karachi Consulate will be fully functional from next year is also heartening."

"Will Masses Forget The U.S. Atrocities," an editorial in the Karachi-based, pro-Taliban Jihadi Urdu daily "Islam" (cir. 15,000) (08/21)

"Ambassador Holbrooke's visit appears worthless to bring about any substantial change in the prevailing situation in Pakistan. It was definitely aimed at promoting the vested U.S. interest in this region. If the Obama administration indeed wants the support of the Pakistani masses, it must put an end to its interference in the internal affairs of this country and withdraw its forces from Afghanistan. It must also know that the ruling elites of Afghanistan and Pakistan do not represent the true feelings and aspirations of the ordinary people of their countries."

"U.S. Support: Need For Good Governance In Pakistan," an editorial in the country's premier business newspaper, "Business Recorder" (cir. 25,000) (08/21)

"Richard Holbrooke, Special U.S. Representative for Pakistan and Afghanistan, revealed that President Barack Obama would preside over the Friends of Democratic Pakistan (FoDP) meeting to be held in New York next month.... There is little doubt that the presence of President Obama at the FoDP would raise its profile to a level that would not have been possible otherwise. That this may provide the necessary impetus for FoDP to translate their pledges of over 5.28 billion dollars made on March 16 this year in Tokyo.... Critics, however, insist that the raison d'être behind the failure of pledges to transform into commitments is rooted in the perception of our friends that Pakistan continues to suffer from poor governance, high levels of corruption in which senior politicians/bureaucrats are complicit and their consequent lack of accountability."

"The Revolving Door," an editorial in the center-right national English daily "The Nation" (cir. 20,000) (08/21)

"Islamabad is now more like a revolving door through which American officials walk in to monitor how effectively the Pakistan Army is combating terrorism. Richard Holbrooke left and in comes CENTCOM Chief General David Petraeus.... News reports quoted diplomatic sources as saying that the visit was aimed at expediting the delivery of weapons and intelligence equipment to Pakistan so that it could expand its offensive against militants in the tribal areas bordering Pakistan."

"Fragmented Force?," an editorial in the populist, often sensational national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (08/21)

"The signs are there of an organization caught in a swirl of confusion with no clear-cut agreement on future [TTP] leadership. It is to be seen how many will accept Faqir Muhammad. The fact that the TTP has separate organizations based in different areas makes the matter of uniting it under one leadership even more fraught with peril. Some have already raised the possibility of a potentially dangerous splintering of the TTP and as such added complexities in fighting it. It is clear the group is in chaos and this would then seem to represent the right time to go after it militarily, before it can regroup in any form, and deliver a blow to further cripple it."

"TTP Crumbles Down," an editorial in the center-right national English daily "The Nation" (cir. 20,000) (08/21)

"Reportedly, several members belonging to the TTP have been killed because of this intra-outfit conflict. While this state of affairs is a far cry from the cohesiveness that the organization had under the command of Baitullah Mehsud who has now been confirmed dead, it is an ideal moment for the army to strike and eliminate the existing part of the network. A lot is at stake in the fight against militancy. The important thing is that the writ of the state must be restored. The TTP forces stand badly demoralized. The authorities must have a close look at the ground realities and act fast, keeping in mind the best interests of the country rather than launch an operation at the instance of an outside power that ultimately militates against them."

"Musharraf's Trial?," an editorial in the populist, often sensational national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (08/21)

"Certainly, we all know there have been efforts from the U.K. to campaign for Musharraf to be let off. The stance of Washington under Obama is more ambiguous, but it is possible the new administration there may too wish to stand by a former ally. Though the PM has said on record the army is not involved, we do not know what wheels move behind the scenes or what discreet efforts may be on to save a former chief."

"Jungle Law in U.S. And Affliction Of Aafia Siddiqui," an editorial in the popular rightist Urdu-language daily "Ausaf" (cir. 10,000) (08/21)

"A U.S. court, on the orders of its government, has refused to approve a panel of three Pakistani lawyers constituted by the government of Pakistan. America poses itself the champion of human rights but the inhuman treatment of Dr. Aafia Siddiqui exposes the hollowness of such tall claims of the U.S. government. It also established the fact that the jungle law still rules the roost in the U.S."

(All circulation figures are based on estimation)
Patterson